



*Directed Learning Activity*

**Topic: Topic Sentences**

**Course: English B**

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME (SLO):** Paragraphs should include a clear topic sentence and provide supporting details.

**DLA OBJECTIVE/PURPOSE:** Student will be able to recognize and write effective topic sentences.

**TIME NEEDED TO COMPLETE: 30-45 minutes** (You'll need to complete the independent activity IN THE WRITING CENTER, so be sure you've allotted enough time to do so.)

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Get DLA handout, look over directions, go to a work station (computer, desk) to complete the independent activity, and then sign up with a tutor to review the activity.

**INDEPENDENT ACTIVITY (20-30 minutes):**

- A. Review the attached handout **"TOPIC SENTENCE."**
- B. Optional: Practice selecting workable topic sentences in an online exercise at [http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part3/sixteen/techniques\\_topic.html](http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/sensen/part3/sixteen/techniques_topic.html) 
- C. Practice using what you've learned by completing **Topic Sentence Exercises #1, #2 and #3.**

**REVIEW WITH TUTOR: (10-15 minutes)**

1. Go over your answers to the **Topic Sentence Exercises #1, #2 and #3** with the tutor. With assistance from the tutor, identify and review any aspects of topic sentences that might still be giving you problems.
2. If you're working on an essay of your own, review your topic sentence with the tutor. Consider whether it meets the requirements of a topic sentence. If not, revise it or add a topic sentence.

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Tutor Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** You must complete all of the items in the Independent Activity portion of this DLA before meeting with a tutor for the Review. If your instructor wants evidence of this completed DLA, return this form to him or her with the tutor's signature included.

## TOPIC SENTENCE

All writing should make a clear point. In a multi-paragraph essay, that point is expressed in a thesis statement. In a single-paragraph essay or in a body paragraph of a longer essay, that point is expressed in a **topic sentence** (sometimes called a **focus sentence**).

**Definition:** A topic sentence states the main point of your paragraph. It typically appears at the beginning of the paragraph.

### WRITE A TOPIC SENTENCE:

A topic sentence has two parts: TOPIC (SUBJECT) + MAIN IDEA (FOCUS)

TOPIC = SUBJECT

MAIN IDEA = POINT YOU WANT TO MAKE ABOUT THE SUBJECT

**TOPIC** + **POSSIBLE MAIN IDEAS**

El Camino College has a beautiful campus

El Camino College offers a wide variety of courses

El Camino College has been impacted by state budget cuts

El Camino College offers a number of special programs

TOPIC SENTENCE

El Camino College offers a number of special programs.

### BASICS OF WRITING A GOOD TOPIC SENTENCE:

1. **NOT A FACT:** Your topic sentence should NOT be a fact. It should state an idea that can be developed by reasons and examples and details.

**Fact:** El Camino College is located in Torrance. ☹️

**Topic Sentence:** El Camino is easily accessed from its surrounding communities. 😊

2. **NOT TOO BIG:** You should be able to illustrate your point in a single paragraph—you're not writing a book.

**Too Big:** El Camino has a long and fascinating history spanning over 60 years. ☹️

**Topic Sentence:** The establishment of the El Camino Community College District back in 1946 makes a fascinating story. 😊

3. **MAKES ONLY A SINGLE POINT:** Your topic sentence should stick to only one point; put the second point in another paragraph.

**Too Many Points:** El Camino College has a beautiful campus and offers a wide variety of courses. ☹️

**Topic Sentence:** El Camino College has a beautiful campus. 😊

4. **AVOIDS STATEMENT OF BELIEF OR INTENT:** Leave off statements like “*I believe*” or “*In my opinion*” or “*In this paragraph I will....*”

**Statement of Intent:** This paragraph will describe special programs offered at El Camino College. ☹️

**Topic Sentence:** El Camino College offers a number of special programs. 😊

**Statement of Belief:** I think El Camino College has a beautiful campus. ☹️

**Topic Sentence:** El Camino College has a beautiful campus. 😊

## TOPIC SENTENCE EXERCISES

### Topic Sentence Exercise #1

Instructions: Draw a line from each possible topic sentence on the left to the description on the right that best describes it. One match has been done for you.

<u>Possible Topic Sentence</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
My family arrived in Yosemite on July 14, 2011.	workable topic sentence
Yosemite is the best national park in America.	more than one main idea
My family's visit to Yosemite this summer turned out to be a disaster.	too broad
Visiting Yosemite with my family was both fun and educational.	includes statement of intent
This paragraph will describe my trip to Yosemite.	a fact

### Topic Sentence Exercise #2

Instructions: In each of the topic sentences below, circle the topic (subject) and underline the main idea (focus).

Example: My cousin Loretta is a terrible gossip.

1. Andre's bedroom looks like a bomb hit it.
2. My statistics class was a nightmare.
3. Mardi Gras in New Orleans can be a wild experience.
4. Her stepson is a talented musician.
5. Learning a new language can be a challenge.
6. My dog's personality resembles mine.

### Topic Sentence Exercise #3

Instructions: Write a topic sentence for each of the topics below by adding a main idea.

Example:     **Topic:** My history professor

**Topic Sentence:** My history professor *is a very effective instructor.*

1. **Topic:** My first day of college

**Topic Sentence:** My first day of college \_\_\_\_\_.

2. **Topic:** Taco Bell

**Topic Sentence:** Taco Bell \_\_\_\_\_.

3. **Topic:** Reality TV

**Topic Sentence:** Reality TV \_\_\_\_\_.

4. **Topic:** Cell phones

**Topic Sentence:** Cell phones \_\_\_\_\_.